

# Handling Human Waste or Sewage after a Flood

## Overview:

Flood waters and sewer overflows can contain germs and human waste that may cause disease. After flood waters and/or sewer overflows are gone, follow the information below to protect yourself and others.

## If possible, wear personal protective equipment (PPE)

- People handling human waste or sewage should wear proper PPE. People should wash hands with soap and water *immediately after* removing PPE. The following PPE is recommended when handling human waste or sewage:
  - **Goggles** to protect eyes from splashes of human waste or sewage,
  - **Protective face mask or splash-proof face shield** to protect nose and mouth from splashes of human waste or sewage,
  - **Liquid-repellent coveralls** to keep human waste or sewage off clothing,
  - **Waterproof gloves** to prevent exposure to human waste or sewage, AND
  - **Rubber boots** to prevent exposure to human waste or sewage.
- If you do not have all recommended PPE, wear what is available to you.
- Remove any PPE and clothes worn while handling human waste or sewage before leaving the cleanup area.

## Keep yourself and other safe with basic hygiene practices

- [Wash hands with soap and water](#) immediately after handling human waste or sewage. Make sure to wash hands with soap and water before eating and drinking, and before and after using the toilet.
  - Learn more about [Personal Hygiene During and After a Flood](#)
- Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60% alcohol.
  - You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label. Hand sanitizer is not effective for visibly soiled hands. Consider keeping some wet wipes to clean hands first before use of hand sanitizer when water isn't available.
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, eyes, nose, or open sores and cuts while handling human waste or sewage. Keep open sores, cuts, and wounds covered with clean, dry bandages.
- Do **not** smoke or chew tobacco or gum while handling human waste or sewage.
- Shower or bathe as soon as you can after leaving the cleanup area.
- Do not allow children to play in areas contaminated by sewage overflows.

**If human waste or sewage comes into contact with your eyes, gently flush them with safe water.**

**Resources:**

CDC: [Handling Human Waste or Sewage](#)

CDC: [Guidelines for Septic and Onsite Wastewater Systems](#)

EPA: [What to Do With Your Private Well After a Flood](#)